

Making Global Connections

OVERVIEW

Students demonstrate the interconnectedness of global issues and solutions through a kinesthetic exercise using global issue cards and a ball of yarn.

INQUIRY/CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- How are global issues interconnected?
- How does a change in one global issue affect other global issues?
- How are solutions to global problems interconnected?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Kinesthetically experience the interconnectedness of global issues
- Understand how a change in one issue can positively and negatively affect a change in another issue

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour

KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS

- **Global issues**
- **Interconnections**
- **Systems thinking**

SUBJECT AREAS

- **Social Studies** (World History, World Cultures, Geography, Economics, Global Studies)
- **Science** (Life, Environmental)

NATIONAL STANDARDS CONSISTENCY

- **NCSS: 3, 7, 8, 9**
- **NSES: A, C, E, F**

GRADE LEVEL: 5–12

FTF Related Reading

- Intermediate: Chapter 1 from *Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions*
- Advanced: Unit 1, Chapter 1 from *It's All Connected*

Materials/Preparation

- Handout, *Global Issues Cards*, 1 card per student (or 1 per pair of students if you do the activity in pairs). For advanced students, mix in the *Advanced Global Issues Cards*
- Ball of yarn

Activity

Introduction

1. Write the following quote on the board or overhead and have students

do a journal entry or “freewrite” (a short, ungraded, in-class writing that allows students to compose freely and fluently on a given word, quote, piece of art, etc.) on it:

“When you try to pick out anything by itself, you find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” - John Muir

After they write for a few minutes, lead a class discussion about the quote, having students share their writing.

2. Alternatively, you can introduce the activity by asking students to think about something they ate today. Then ask them to think about how the food/meal might be connected to the environment. Did the production, processing, or transportation have any

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impact on the natural environment, including water, land, plants, or animals? Now ask them to choose 1 of these environmental connections and think about its human connection. Does the environmental impact have any effect on people? Do people use the environmental resource? After a few seconds, have 1 or 2 students share their series of connections.

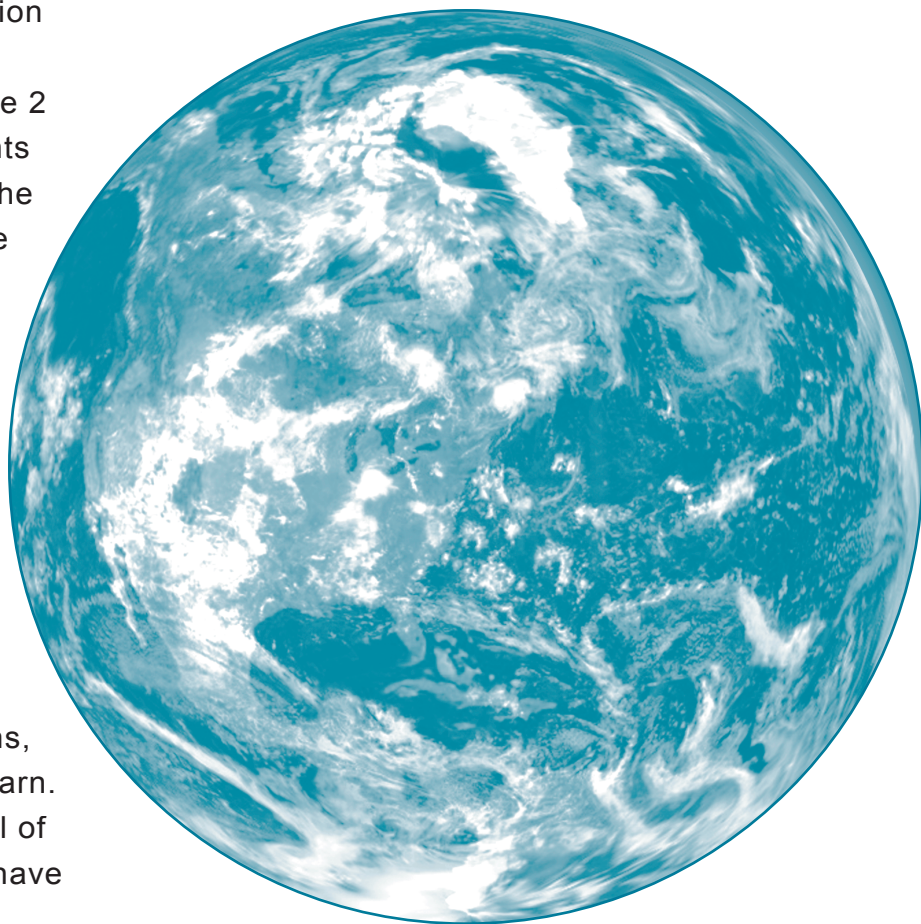
3. Tell students they are going to do an exercise that will help them see and experience how global issues are interconnected.

Steps

1. Have students stand in a circle. Pass out the *Global Issues Cards* to each student and keep 1 card for yourself. In classes with more than 16 students, you can have students pair up, choose 1

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- card between them, and do the activity together. Have the pairs stand so that 1 partner is in front of the other.
2. Read aloud the global issue on your card and then toss the ball of yarn to a student across the circle.
 3. Have that student (together with his/her partner) read the global issue on his/her card and state how this issue is connected to your issue (e.g. healthcare is connected to poverty because most people living in poverty do not have access to basic healthcare; conflict is connected to discrimination because some wars are started when one group of people does not like another group based strictly on their ethnic background or religious beliefs; education is connected to population growth because people with higher levels of education tend to have fewer children). If the student(s) cannot figure out how the 2 issues are connected, other students in the circle can help. If no one in the circle can think of a connection, the student(s) can pass and continue the activity.
 4. Once the student(s) has stated how her/his issue is connected to the previous one, she/he holds onto a piece of the yarn and tosses the ball of yarn to someone else across the circle.
 5. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball of yarn, called out the interconnections, and is now holding a piece of the yarn. Have the last student throw the ball of yarn back to you. You should now have a representative “web” of yarn with every student holding a Global Issues Card and a piece of the web.
 6. Have everyone pull the string so the web is taut.
 7. Tug on your piece of the yarn and ask if anyone felt the tug. Have some others tug on the yarn and see who else feels it. Try tugging harder and see who feels it then. Ask what that tug might represent or signify about the connections between global issues.
 8. Conclude the lesson with a discussion using the reflection questions below. You may want to lead the discussion while the students are still standing and holding the yarn so the symbolism of the web is still present.



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Assessment Reflection Questions

For Intermediate and Advanced Students

- Why might it be helpful to understand how and why global issues are interconnected?
- Can you think of other issues that might be interconnected like the ones raised in this activity?
- How can understanding the interconnectedness of global issues help us find solutions to the problems surrounding these issues?

For Advanced Students

- Understanding the interconnectedness of issues can often be the first step in solving problems. Interconnectedness is an important and key concept in “systems thinking”—a holistic way of thinking that takes into account the connections, interactions, and processes that link different elements together and form a complete “system”. By understanding that issues are interconnected, we can begin to see when and where we can intervene in a system to make change (see *It's All Connected*, Units 1 and 7 for a detailed discussion of systems thinking). What are some examples of places we could intervene in a system and maximize positive connections between various issues? Have the students discuss the idea of intervening in a system and making positive changes.
- Identify not only where or when one could intervene in a system but how an individual's actions can “snowball” – i.e. trigger other reactions in the system that build upon and sustain the positive effects of the original action. What kind of small action might snowball into a large result? How can small changes replicate and multiply to produce widespread and lasting change?



Writing Connection

- Arrange students in groups of 5 or 6. Using a *Global Issues Card*, 1 student writes a short story (2-3 sentences) about his/her issue on the top of a piece of notebook paper and then passes the story to the next student. That student then writes a short story (1-2 sentence) that explains how the issue on his/her card is connected to the previous story. They then fold the paper so that only the last story is visible, and pass it on to someone else. Keep passing, writing, and folding the paper until everyone has written part of the connections story. Once everyone has written, have each group open the whole story and read it aloud to the class.

Art Connection

- Have students create a “global issues mobile” using photos or drawings (glued to cardboard) that represent different global issues. Find photos or create drawings, glue the pictures onto cardboard, and cut them into shapes. Write the global issues on the back of the cardboard. Use either wire or string to attach the pieces to cross bars made of either wooden dowels or sticks.

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Action Projects

- Throw a “BeadWear Party” at your school through the BeadforLife project. BeadforLife is an organization that fights poverty by employing very poor women in Uganda to make beautiful jewelry out of recycled paper. This project gives students the opportunity to help women feed their children and send them to school by buying their products, while also educating students, their friends, parents, and community about Uganda and the plight of poor people around the world. For a detailed description of this and other service learning projects, visit www.facingthefuture.org and click on **Take Action** and then **Service Learning Projects**.
- Have students adopt a retirement home for the school year. Make 2-4 visits during the year to develop a relationship with the individuals living at the home. Students interview the residents to learn their perspectives on global issues, and make global issues mobiles with them that incorporate both the students’ and the residents’ perspectives. Through visits, interviews, and discussions, students find out what their needs are and develop a project that addresses those needs.
- Have students get involved in the issue they care about most with millions of other young people from around the world on Global Youth Service Day, which occurs every year in late April. Visit www.gysd.net for more information.

Additional Resources

Films

- *Finding Balance: Forests and Family Planning in Madagascar*, Population Action International, 2005, 9 minutes, www.populationaction.org. This short documentary explores the connections between women’s health and environmental sustainability.

Books

- *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*, Fritjof Capra, Anchor, 1997. Capra sets forth a new scientific language to describe the interrelationships and interdependence of psychological, biological, physical, social, and cultural phenomena.
- *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcolm Gladwell, Back Bay Books, 2002. Gladwell’s “Tipping Point” theory is based on three main principles: ideas are contagious, little causes can have big effects, and change does not happen gradually but at one pivotal moment. The challenge is to find the right leverage point and push or “tip” it, setting off a chain reaction of positive change.

Websites

- www.facingthefuture.org - Facing the Future’s website focuses on the interconnectedness of global issues and sustainability.
- www.pegasuscom.com - Pegasus Communications’ website provides systems thinking resources to help individuals, teams, and organizations understand and address the challenges and complexities of a changing world.
- www.sustainabilityinstitute.org – The Sustainability Institute focuses on understanding the root causes of unsustainable behavior in complex systems and, through projects and training, helps people shift their mindsets and restructure systems in ways that move us toward a sustainable society.

Global Issues Cards (Page 1)

Use these with Intermediate and Advanced Class



Poverty



Consumption



Population Growth



Peace and Conflict



Human Migration



Environment



Technology



Healthcare

Global Issues Cards (Page 2)

Use these with Intermediate and Advanced Class



Education



Food



Water



Economics



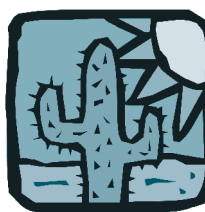
Discrimination



Sustainability



Human Rights



Global Warming

Global Issues Cards (Page 3)

use these *additional* cards with Advanced Class



Governance



Culture



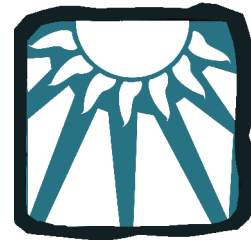
Social Justice



Biodiversity



**Non-Renewable
Resources**



**Renewable
Resources**



Media



Energy Use